

ARTISTS SPACE
Paper Exhibition
January 15-March 7, 2009
Curated by Raimundas Malasauskas

Curator's Guide to the Show

The poet Joseph Brodsky once wrote “There is more and more paper, less and less rice.” Perhaps for Brodsky rice stood for nature, paper for bureaucracy, speculation and units of value. The relationship between rice and paper is an interesting one: you can literally turn a stash of rice into a precious sheet of paper or you can exchange a certain amount of paper notes for a certain amount of rice. And while rice and paper altogether can be replaced by a credit from the future, a whole realm of less economically-driven conversions between rice, paper and virtual domains also exist.

For example, in his work *Flaubert: Madame Bovary (Last Chapter-3062 words)*, Trong Gia Nguyen wrote the entirety of the last chapter of Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* using 3,062 kernels of rice. They fit in a little bag the size of a library card while the rest of Flaubert and Brodsky can be found in the public library. While these sources have informed thinking surrounding the show, *Paper Exhibition* focuses on more obscure books such as *In The Kaleidoscope Room* by Elizabeth Stone and *Phantom Rosebuds* by Clifford Irving.

Elizabeth Stone’s writing was greatly rediscovered through the work of Jonah Freeman (Freeman will present a lecture on Stone’s long forgotten book at Artists Space.) Freeman’s work became a key source for a seminar that I conducted at the California College of Arts in San Francisco in 2008 that helped to coin the term of “Crypto-Museology.”¹ *Paper Exhibition* draws on the term in a rather transparent way – you can even edit its definition online at www.artistspace.org/paperexhibition. Chris Fitzpatrick and the Post Brothers, who wrote the initial draft of this term, have also interviewed the artist Dora Garcia which became her contribution to this exhibition. Together, with Gabriel Lester’s self-produced piano music album, the interview is also accessible online.

¹ “Crypto-museology” is the science, practice, or study of unverifiable and unsubstantiated cultural and museological practices. While “museology” refers to the science, practice, or study of museums, the prefix “crypto” comes from the Greek word “kruptos,” which translates to “hidden.” There are countless real and imagined fields and ideologies using the prefix—from crypto-Judaism to crypto-sporidium—yet crypto-museology is most closely related to crypto-zoology. After all, the crypto-zoologist searches for and studies marginal animals—such as the Loch Ness Monster, Bigfoot, Unicorns, and Jackalopes—whose existence or survival remains unsubstantiated or disputed. By engaging with entities and bodies of knowledge that deny normative ordering mechanisms, both crypto-epistemological methodologies refute the guarantee of an objective and decipherable world. (Chris Fitzpatrick & Post Brothers)

Since Crypto-Museology is partially derived from Crypto-Zoology, a science of imaginary animals and creatures, the figure of Schrodinger's Cat² seemed to make a nice link between the two ideas. When I asked Benoit Maire if he would make a drawing of Schrodinger's Cat for the exhibition, he sent a white shirt with a drawing on the interior. He later noted that if, when I received the work, I could see a cat in the piece he would be both happy and sad at the same time ("not in a box.") Do you see the cat?

Over-exposure resulting from too much illumination is one of the interests of Crypto-Museology, particularly when this over illumination leads to disappearance. Some of the works in the exhibition are in the process of slowly disappearing like Pratchaya Phinthong's work *No Patents on Ideas*, the title of which derives from a quote by Thomas Jefferson. Disappearance is also addressed in the outlines of the window facing Greene Street that can be seen in Adam Putnam's work *Untitled (Mirror)*, produced using a large pin-hole camera built inside the gallery. The holes in Job Piston's stack of napkins entitled *Untitled (Etiquette)* may be bigger than a pinhole image, but they are also meant to disappear throughout the exhibition.

In contrast to disappearing images, some of the works will appear in the gallery while the show is already on view. For instance, Joe Zane's vase was accidentally damaged at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston last year, and subsequently requested for loan to *Paper Exhibition* in its fragmented state. This work is still awaiting the proper documentation from the insurance company to be released from the museum's storage facility. A pedestal for this manifestation of illicit knowledge (what could be more illicit than the notion of a damaged artwork hidden in museum storage?) sits as a symbolic gesture of what is to come along with the blank back wall of the gallery, which will serve as the stage for Pierre Leguillon's *Slideshow/Cloakroom* performance. As a result, some works in the show exist *sans papiers*. Others may collapse in the blink of an eye, like Melvin Moti's sculpture made of a soap bubble, all whilst the sound of Robert Rauschenberg erasing Willem de Kooning's drawings emanate from Mario Garcia Torres' piece entitled *An undisclosed month in 1953*.

Another key piece of writing that has informed the exhibition is the book *Phantom Rosebuds* by Clifford Irving released by Dexter Sinister last year. An autobiography, the book describes Irving's career from his early years through the Howard Hughes autobiography scandal and its aftermath, to

² Schrödinger's cat is a thought experiment, often described as a paradox, devised by Austrian physicist Erwin Schrödinger in 1935. It illustrates what he saw as the problem of the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics being applied to everyday objects. The thought experiment presents a cat that might be alive or dead, depending on an earlier random event (Wikipedia)

the present day. During Dexter Sinister's book launch in Los Angeles last year, the artist Morten Norbye Halvorsen recorded the voices of the book's four protagonists, as well as its author, before the event. They rearranged the recordings into a sound collage full of time-loops and leaps. For *Paper Exhibition*, it fittingly plays in the Blue Room of Artists Space, a space dedicated to reading and conversation. Among the voices that are audible in this soundscape, alongside Clifford Irving, are Amy Robinson, Nicholas Matranga, Kevin Killian and Job Piston.

While Amy Robinson recently made a drawing of her own version of the cover of *Phantom Rosebuds*, Nicholas Matranga wrote an additional chapter for the book and sent through the mail a Polaroid picture of an unfolded paper airplane; Job Piston made his cocktail ring napkins (all featured in the exhibition), and San Francisco-based writer Kevin Killian answered questions from the audience. The full autobiography of Clifford Irving can be found in issue no. 16 of *Dot Dot Dot*, also presented at Artists Space. It is important to note here that *Paper Exhibition* is itself an adaptation of a future book by the same name to be released by Dexter Sinister at an un-defined time in the near future.

Gabriel Lester and Fia Backström also participated in the launch of *Phantom Rosebuds* in San Francisco. Fia interviewed Edgar Mitchell the 6th astronaut to walk on the moon. Gabriel Lester's video work *Four Doves* will follow later in the show, along with two other films featuring magicians: Aurelien Froment's *Theatre de Poche* and Lea Lagasse's *Oops!... I did it again*. Magic of doubling is also featured in another work by Aurelien Froment, entitled *Who Here Listens to BBC News on Friday Night?*. Egle Budvytyte's video *The Sect* will dive into modern sectarian rituals and secrets.

When I asked Judith Braun if she could literally draw a line between reality and fiction, she responded with a charcoal drawing on the longest wall of the gallery. Simultaneously drawing with both hands she created a life-size image that constantly moves in and out of an invisible center toward multiple destinations. Olivier Babin burned one of his earlier wooden sculptures and turned the ash into a diamond. Joe Scanlan's *Snowflake Server* can download images of perfect snowflakes on your hard drive.

Carbon serves as the foundation of both Braun and Babin's work. Isn't carbon one of the lightest, yet strongest, elements on Earth? More question-like-facts such as this are presented in John Menick's text based video work *Hearsay* that exemplifies individual folds of knowledge. William S. Burroughs and Brian Gysin claimed that a contraption called a "Dreamachine" possessed the ability to induce hallucinations. You can see for yourself with Gareth Spor's own *Dreamachine*. Curator Francesco Manacorda referred to this piece as "a little group show" where traces of Burroughs and the work of

artists Loris Gréaud and Cerith Wyn Evans all collide. Literally, a collide-o-scope.

Of course, it would be a shame to exhibit only conceptual folds, holes and gaps. The materiality of the fold comes into play in the works of Mark Geffriaud and Mariana Castillo Deball. Mariana folded a number of sheets of paper into structures that resemble masks in anthropological display while Mark asked an origami master to recreate a crumpled piece of paper. However, recreation and repetition didn't only happen once. In Julieta Aranda's *Untitled (Mirror)* another mirror showed up, cancelled out the first one and infinitely multiplied, but fortunately we don't see it.

Marcos Lutyens' interactive *Hypnotic Show* incorporates specially commissioned artist scripts and the mind of the participant. The goal of the hypnosis is to install a new exhibition in the memory of an individual. But aren't all exhibitions unique to each viewer? Are there two identical shows? How many different Donelle Woolford's have you seen? More than two. And one is in the show.

Herman Melville and E.L. Doctorow make up the collage *9 year old boy* by Alex Cechetti who determined that the overlay of these two individuals would create the ideal viewer of his own work. I asked if this viewer could be invited to view *Paper Exhibition*.

In an additional performance to take place during the exhibition, Will Holder explains what happens outside of the viewer when ideals follow ideas. Michael Portnoy and Vita Zaman are also currently writing the script "Spending in 2008" a piece that will be presented at a reading event towards the end of the show. In a similar fashion, natural beans are growing from the crumpled pages of *Madame Bovary* planted by Julieta Aranda in wine glass flower pots. It signals a time to start writing the guide to the exhibition.

-Raimundas Malasauskas

<< This exhibition is inspired by and contains works of all the artists presented in the show >>